

GAO

Report to the Chairman, Committee on  
Armed Services, House of  
Representatives

May 2001

# KOSOVO AIR OPERATIONS

## Combat Aircraft Basing Plans Are Needed in Advance of Future Conflicts



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GAO

Accountability \* Integrity \* Reliability

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## Abbreviations

DOD	Department of Defense
EUCOM	U.S. European Command
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
USAFE	U.S. Air Forces in Europe



United States General Accounting Office  
Washington, DC 20548

May 29, 2001

The Honorable Bob Stump  
Chairman, Committee on Armed Services  
House of Representatives

Dear Mr. Chairman:

On March 24, 1999, the United States provided military forces in support of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) combat operations against Yugoslavia following the failure of peace talks and escalating violence against ethnic Albanians in Kosovo. Combat operations officially ended on June 20, 1999, with the Yugoslav acceptance of a peace plan and the United Nations' endorsement of the plan. Your Committee requested that we examine a number of issues associated with the conduct of these combat operations, called Operation Allied Force. This report, one in a series responding to your requests, assesses how well the United States was prepared for basing its combat aircraft during this operation. Specifically, we determined (1) whether plans were in place to determine where and how to deploy combat aircraft for an operation like Allied Force, (2) how combat aircraft basing decisions were coordinated among the services and allied nations, and (3) whether the United States had the necessary international agreements in place to enable it to quickly execute plans for such an operation.

The Department of Defense (DOD) and the Department of State both have roles in planning the basing of U.S. aircraft overseas. In the European theater, the U.S. European Command (EUCOM) is responsible for maintaining forces ready to conduct the full spectrum of military operations, enhancing transatlantic security through support to NATO, promoting regional stability, and advancing U.S. interests. EUCOM's Commander also serves as NATO's Supreme Allied Commander in Europe. U.S. Air Forces in Europe (USAFE) is the air component of the U.S. European Command. In fulfilling its NATO responsibilities, USAFE maintains combat-ready aircraft dispersed from Great Britain to Turkey. The Department of State oversees the negotiation of international agreements between the United States and host nation governments.

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## Results in Brief

The United States had no specific and detailed advanced plans that could be used to determine where and how to deploy its combat aircraft during Operation Allied Force because it was a combination of peacetime and combat operations. Overall plans for operations in defense of NATO members did not apply to this conflict. While part of the U.S. European Command's mission is to plan for NATO conflicts, the Command had no prepared plan that could be applied to the conflict in Kosovo. As the major supplier of combat aircraft for this operation, the United States developed plans for aircraft basing as the conflict was ongoing. Because force requirements frequently changed, the deployment of aircraft did not proceed initially in a way that took into account what might be needed later. In some cases, units already sent to the region had to be returned to their home bases as the buildup of aircraft in the region increased and airfields became overly congested.

Neither the U.S. European Command nor any U.S. military service coordinated combat aircraft basing decisions for all the U.S. service components and for all allies. While the U.S. European Command's mission is to serve as the focal point for American support to NATO, the services, for the most part, planned their own deployments. Aircraft land-basing issues for naval forces were minimal, as the majority of naval forces supporting Operation Allied Force were pre-planned, rotationally deployed using normal deployment/detachment facilities. The Air Force took the lead in making combat aircraft basing decisions because it had the largest proportion of combat aircraft involved in the operation. However, the lack of a single focal point caused problems in coordination and communication. For example, the services expressed confusion about how basing arrangements should be made and found that each U.S. request for aircraft access was treated differently by each nation. Also, the lack of one focal point for all NATO allies resulted in instances in which the U.S. State Department, U.S. military, and allied partners were not aware of what the others were arranging in terms of combat aircraft basing.

The United States had general agreements with most countries involved in Operation Allied Force to cover the legal status and protection of U.S. citizens. However, the United States did not have more specific agreements with many countries addressing such issues as (1) which host countries would provide what airfield access and (2) what rates would be charged for the logistics services provided. DOD develops such agreements with Department of State oversight. Because these more specific agreements were absent, the services procured necessary airfield

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access and logistics items in an ad hoc fashion and were vulnerable to being charged excessive costs.

The European Command and the Air Force now recognize the need for better planning for combat aircraft basing. We are recommending that the Secretary of Defense direct the Commander of the U.S. European Command to take the lead in the planning and coordination needed for future European theater conflicts like Operation Allied Force. This planning should include finalizing aircraft basing strategies and concluding supplemental international agreements in consultation with the Department of State with countries from which logistics services would be required.

We are making recommendations to the Secretary of Defense to address combat aircraft basing plans for future conflicts like Operation Allied Force that do not fit into the category of a major theater war or a peacekeeping operation. The Department of Defense concurred with our recommendations.

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## Background

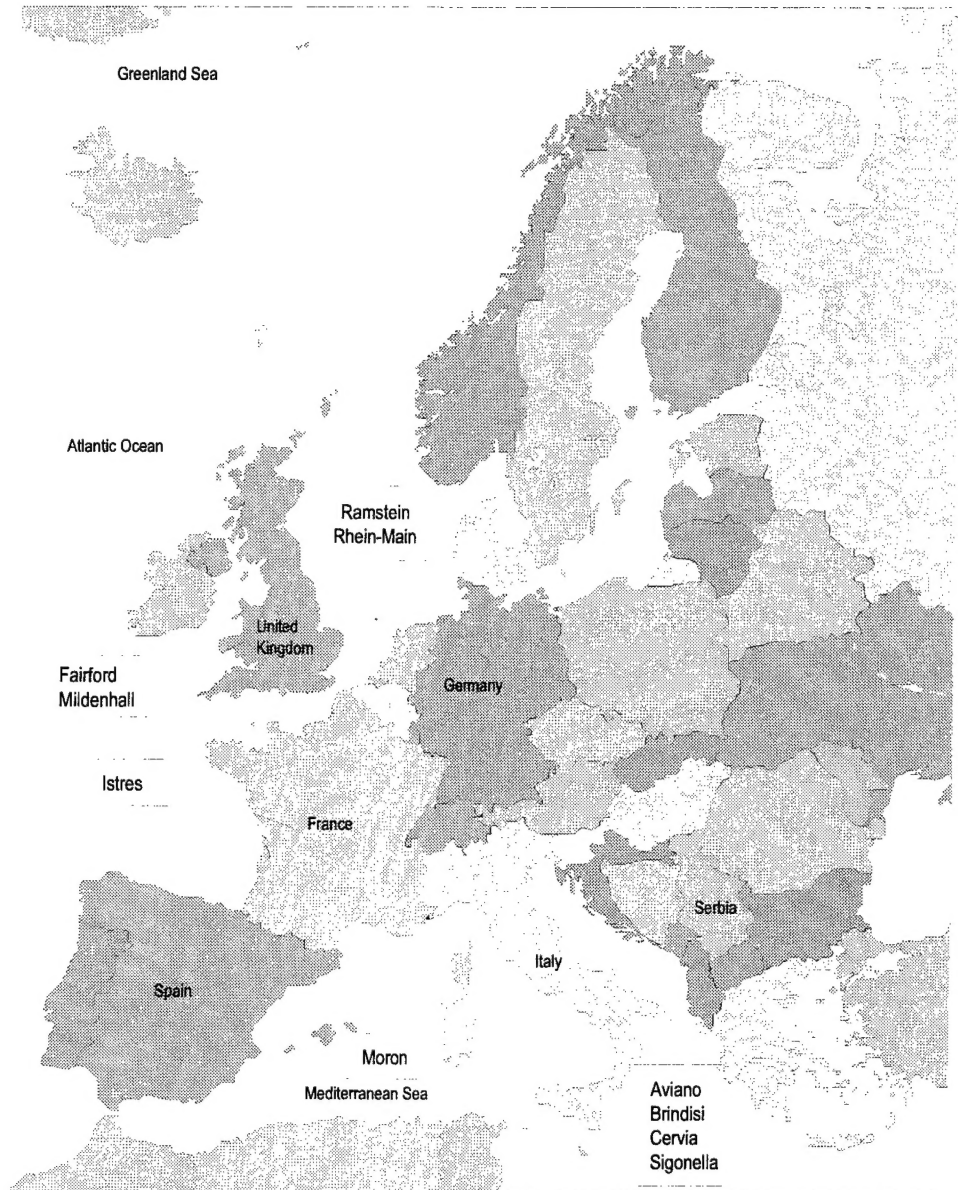
Since the end of the Cold War, the United States has dramatically decreased its overseas basing of military forces. The Air Force's presence in Europe, for example, shrank from 25 bases with 850 aircraft in 1990 to just 6 bases<sup>1</sup> and 174 aircraft in 1999. In preparation for Operation Allied Force, the Air Force augmented its supply of aircraft in the European theater to 207 aircraft at 10 bases in 5 European countries (see fig. 1).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>These six bases were Aviano, Italy; Incirlik, Turkey; Lakenheath and Mildenhall, the United Kingdom; and Ramstein and Spangdahlem, Germany.

<sup>2</sup>At the beginning of Operation Allied Force, the Navy was using Souda Bay, Crete, as a land base.

**Figure 1: European Land Bases Being Used by U.S. Aircraft at the Beginning of Operation Allied Force**



Source: GAO analysis of Air Force data.

By the end of the operation, just 78 days later, NATO had assembled over 1,000 aircraft in the region. Of these, the United States provided over 700,

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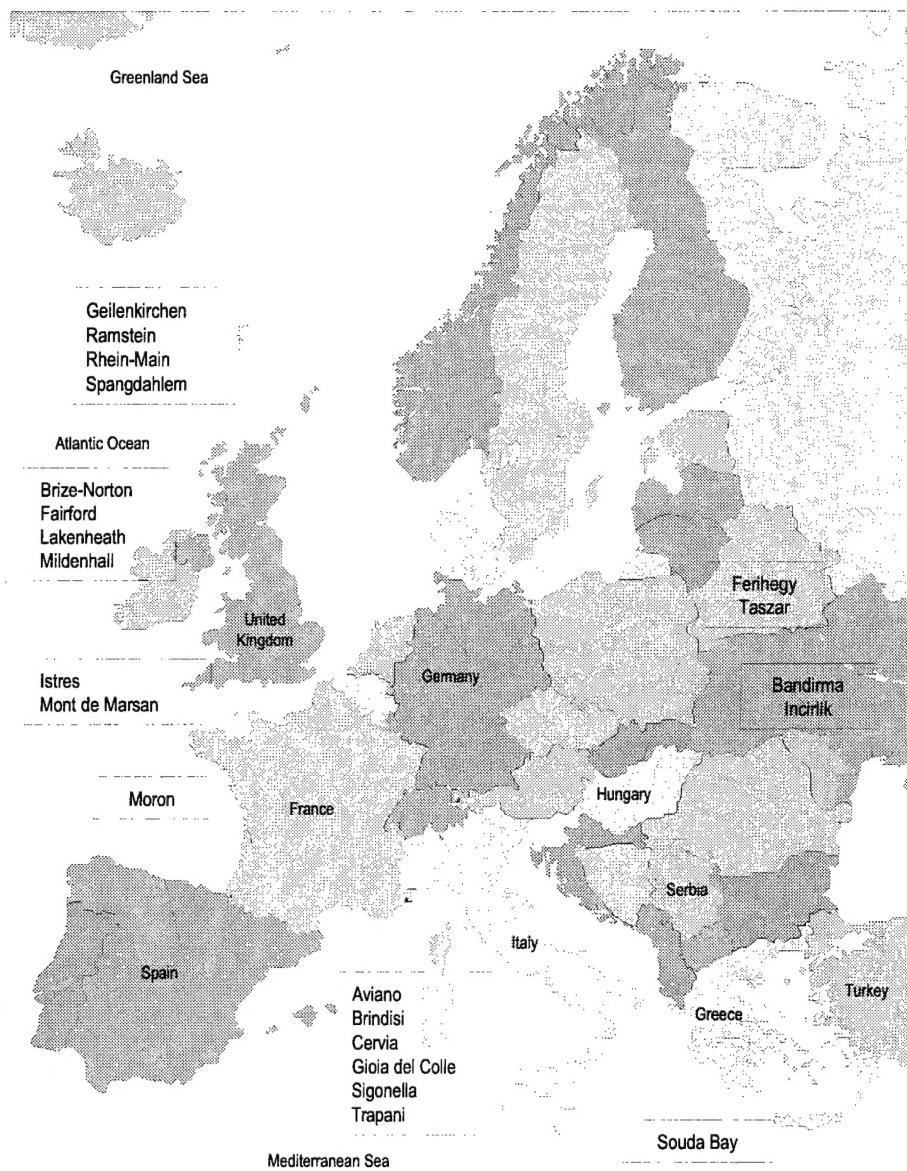
and other NATO allies contributed the remainder. Of the more than 700 U.S. aircraft, over 500 fixed-wing aircraft were deployed at 22 land bases in 8 countries (see fig. 2). Seventy percent of the U.S. land-based aircraft belonged to the Air Force, and 30 percent to the Navy and the Marine Corps.<sup>3</sup> These numbers exclude all helicopters, including the Army Apache helicopters that were deployed to Albania.<sup>4</sup> According to an after-action report by USAFE, in terms of size and resource allocations, Operation Allied Force was the equivalent of a major theater war for the U.S. Air Force.

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<sup>3</sup>Aircraft land-basing issues for naval forces were minimal, as the majority of naval forces supporting Operation Allied Force were located at bases the Navy was already using.

<sup>4</sup>The Army deployed Apache helicopters in support of Task Force Hawk. We addressed Task Force Hawk in a separate report: *Kosovo Air Operations: Army Resolving Lessons Learned Regarding the Apache Helicopter* (GAO-01-401, Mar. 2, 2001).

**Figure 2: European Land Bases Being Used by U.S. Aircraft at the End of Operation Allied Force**



Source: GAO analysis of Air Force data.



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Arranging for combat aircraft basing involves much planning. This planning generally includes

- working with the host countries and U.S. embassies to obtain permission to base aircraft in specific locations;
- conducting extensive site visits to determine what improvements must be made to foreign airfields and arranging for the improvements to be completed;
- ensuring that U.S. aircraft have adequate ramp space, hangars, and fuel; and
- obtaining all the logistics services necessary to sustain and house the personnel who will be deployed at foreign airfields.

Because the United States no longer has the large number of established bases it had during the Cold War, experience has shown that it is in the best interest of the United States to work out as many of these details in advance as possible. According to USAFE officials, Status of Forces Agreements with many countries in Europe are very general and provide adequate protections and privileges for official visits, small unit activities, and most short-term exercises and operations. Supplemental agreements, which may be negotiated by DOD in consultation with the Department of State, are useful in addressing the more detailed protections and privileges required for operations approaching the scale of Operation Allied Force.

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## Detailed Plans Did Not Apply to Operation Allied Force

According to EUCOM officials, there was no prepared plan that could be used for executing Operation Allied Force because it was a combination of peacetime and combat operations. At the time of the operation, DOD had detailed war plans for joint military operations written in advance only for two specific major theater wars, neither of which included the European theater. NATO had detailed plans only for what it considered wars in defense of its member partners or for peacetime operations. Thus, the Air Force did not have the benefit of specific advanced determinations of where it could place its combat aircraft quickly and efficiently for Operation Allied Force. The lack of a plan for such operations resulted in ad hoc deployments. Developing detailed plans for every possible contingency throughout Europe would be impractical, but both EUCOM and NATO now recognize that better planning is needed.

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## Lack of Detailed Plans for Operation Allied Force Resulted in Disjointed Deployments

Because the conflict surrounding Kosovo evolved rapidly, Operation Allied Force required not only that plans be quickly developed but that aircraft basing decisions be repeatedly revised. In fact, the plan for conducting the air campaign was changed 70 times during the 78-day operation, according to EUCOM officials. Each time a change was made, adjustments to basing decisions were also necessary. According to a USAFE after-action report, these constant changes in plans prevented decisionmakers for the initial deployments of aircraft from taking into account what deployments of other aircraft might be needed later. In some cases, aircraft units were deployed only to be moved back to where they had come from. For example, early in the conflict, units from the 48th Fighter Wing, at Lakenheath, England, were deployed to Cervia, Italy, but later on, as additional forces were added, these units were sent back to Lakenheath. Similarly, the 52nd Fighter Wing, located in Spangdahlem, Germany, was initially deployed to Aviano Air Base, Italy, until that base filled to capacity and the wing was returned to Spangdahlem.

The lack of a stable plan for combat aircraft basing also affected how airfield space and supplies were provided to U.S. forces deployed during the operation. For example, according to an after-action report by USAFE civil engineers, the lack of a combat aircraft basing plan resulted in the forces first on the ground simply taking the space they needed on a first-come, first-served basis—without thought given to land use, safety, utilities access, or airfield obstructions. An after-action report by USAFE transportation officials said that they had to dramatically tailor the packages of equipment and supplies sent to support troops deployed to combat aircraft bases. This tailoring was necessary because these packages had been planned for operations the size of a major theater war and were not structured into blocks that could be built up as the conflict grew. Finally, details had to be worked out after the conflict began regarding how equipment and supplies destined for aircraft bases could be transported through the countries where U.S. troops were deployed.

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## EUCOM and NATO Proposals to Prepare Plans for Future Contingencies

Exhaustive plans cannot be developed for every possible future contingency. However, EUCOM officials agree that more detailed planning should be done in advance of conflicts such as Operation Allied Force. At the time of our visit, EUCOM was planning to revise a generic plan for operations in support of NATO but said that completing this plan could take 2 years. EUCOM was not yet in a position to state how this new plan would solve problems like the ones encountered during the conflict in Kosovo. The goal is for EUCOM to have a plan that it can use for a future Kosovo-type conflict.

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NATO has also recognized the need for more planning for future operations like Operation Allied Force and has issued a new strategic concept. At its 50th Anniversary Summit in Washington, D.C., in April 1999, while the conflict was ongoing, NATO addressed the likelihood that future Alliance military operations would be smaller in scale than those that were the basis for Alliance planning during the Cold War. According to DOD's after-action report, NATO's new strategic concept reflects the realistic view that the U.S. role in future NATO operations is likely to fall somewhere between full-scale combat operations in defense of the Alliance and peace support activities.

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## No One Organization Directed and Coordinated Combat Aircraft Basing

Despite EUCOM's role as the U.S. focal point in the European theater, EUCOM officials told us that they had neither the resources nor the responsibility to work out detailed combat aircraft basing arrangements for the individual services. Also, during Operation Allied Force, no other organization was tasked with responsibility for directing and coordinating the combat aircraft basing for all U.S. military services and the allies. As a result, the services, for the most part, planned their own deployments and worked out individual arrangements with the host countries. While the services did their best to quickly plan all the details necessary to base their aircraft, the lack of a focal point to coordinate the plans resulted in at least some duplication of effort, in last-minute work that could have been done before the conflict began, and in communications problems among U.S. services and agencies and NATO allies concerning what their individual plans were for basing aircraft. The Air Force has recognized the need to do more preparatory work such as airfield site surveys before future conflicts begin. To address this need, it plans to develop a database of airfield information.

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## Basing Arrangements Were Not Coordinated

In countries where the United States has a permanent presence, DOD and the Department of State have generally negotiated agreements with the host countries stipulating which bases may be used in what circumstances. However, during Operation Allied Force, the United States did not have such agreements worked out in advance with many of the countries involved. EUCOM officials maintained that the services should arrange their own aircraft basing because only they knew their detailed basing needs. However, joint doctrine requires that EUCOM's Commander review the requirements of the various service component commands and establish priorities through the deliberate planning process to use supplies, facilities, mobility assets, and personnel effectively. Such coordination should prevent the unnecessary duplication of facilities and

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overlapping of functions among the services and should include establishing bases and coordinating other logistics requirements.

Absent coordination by EUCOM, service officials expressed confusion during the operation about how basing arrangements should be made. A "huge challenge" in making basing arrangements, according to USAFE officials, was in first determining the chain of command to request the use of airfields from host nations. The services did not always know how or when to coordinate with other services, EUCOM, or allied countries. The services also found that each U.S. request for aircraft access was treated differently by each nation. While most countries accepted a U.S. request at the bilateral level, some countries asked that a formal request originate from NATO headquarters.

Further confusion arose as countries received requests from individual service components for basing arrangements. Section 112b of title 1 of the United States Code requires that Department of State personnel be kept informed of all agreements being made with host countries. Cases arose, however, in which host nation and U.S. Department of State personnel were not aware of what individual service components were doing. For example:

- In one case, U.S. aircraft flying from one allied country to another had to turn around in midair because they had not been approved for landing at their destination.
- In another case, host country officials complained to the U.S. embassy of incessant coordination telephone calls made by U.S. servicemembers.
- In a third case, confusion arose because Air Force personnel were trying to arrange for aircraft basing just as U.S. State Department personnel were trying to negotiate with the host country themselves.
- A fourth situation involved a case in which Air Force deployment of fighter aircraft to an allied base was almost underway before the Air Force learned that adequate space was not available because this ally was not planning to move its own aircraft out.

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### Site Surveys Had to Be Done After the Conflict Began

The services were expected to do their own site surveys of possible airfield locations to determine where units could base their aircraft. No one organization maintained a database of combat aircraft bases that the services might be able to use. According to USAFE officials, there was relatively little information on many of the airfields within EUCOM's area of responsibility. Some information was available from the U.S. National Imagery and Mapping Agency, but much of this information was obsolete.

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As the major supplier of aircraft, the Air Force consequently took the lead in doing these site surveys.

The process for site surveys entailed determining what information needed to be collected and who should be on the survey teams. After the operation had begun, between April 8 and May 24, 1999, USAFE used over 200 persons to form teams to travel to potential sites and complete 27 site surveys. The USAFE group that took the lead in doing these site surveys said in their after-action report that host nation support was largely undefined and that, as a result, they had to operate under numerous constraints. For example, in anticipation of going into the host countries, site survey teams had to first obtain host country approval for their visits. Also, host countries usually allowed teams only one day to survey airfield sites. In addition, according to USAFE officials, many of the personnel on the teams had never before participated in a site survey.

In addition to the efforts of the USAFE teams to do last-minute site surveys, the Marine Corps did its own site surveys. For example, one Marine Corps commanding officer who was planning his unit's deployment to Operation Allied Force formed his own nine-member team to do site surveys of two locations in Hungary. His teams also had only one day to do each site survey, and the commander made his own arrangements with embassy staff to prepare for his unit's deployment. Although this commander told us that he did have access to USAFE's site surveys on these airfields, he found that he still needed to perform a second survey because the Air Force had not gathered all the needed information.

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### Service Actions to Improve Aircraft Basing Plans and Information Available on Airfields in the Theater

Servicemembers throughout the military services worked long and hard to overcome the obstacles cited in this report and to achieve U.S. and NATO objectives in Operation Allied Force. Nevertheless, in response to aircraft basing problems encountered during Operation Allied Force, USAFE officials realized that they needed a better basing strategy. During the conflict, they found that their existing basing structure had not been methodically planned in a way that tied it to probable threats. They decided to do a review of where aircraft should be based in the European theater in anticipation of future threats. As part of this effort, USAFE plans to collect information on each potential air base. The information will include a site survey, base support plans, and host nation agreements. As part of this effort, USAFE also plans to determine what locations could be used as operating bases in the event of future contingency operations.

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At the time of our visit to Europe, USAFE officials had just briefed EUCOM officials on their proposal for developing a basing strategy, and EUCOM officials had decided to form a working group to develop a similar proposal. According to EUCOM's planned approach, dated November 2000, EUCOM hopes to investigate the leasing of specific facilities, airfields, and equipment for future contingencies, among other things, to establish a theater basing strategy.

According to Air Force headquarters officials, it took 17 days to complete each site survey, from its initiation to the host country's approval to use the site. The Air Force believes that these site surveys took far too long to complete. The Air Force has therefore undertaken an effort to build the "Employment Knowledge Base," a database of site surveys that can be accessed when planning a deployment. At present, this is an Air Force-only initiative, though the Marine Corps has expressed interest in it. Part I of a "Survey Tool for Employment Planning" has been developed by a contractor and was fielded in April 2000 to be used as a checklist for persons conducting site surveys. The site survey team can input data into the checklist using a laptop computer. The goal is to have part II of the site survey completed by October 2001. Efforts to update the Employment Knowledge Base from field locations have not yet been funded by the Air Force.

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## **Lack of Supplemental International Agreements Resulted in Ad Hoc Decision-Making and Vulnerability to Excessive Costs**

The lack of supplemental international agreements during Operation Allied Force made the United States vulnerable to hastily made ad hoc arrangements with some host countries. A USAFE official believes that the United States could have paid excessive prices for supplies and services purchased "in the heat of battle" during Operation Allied Force because the United States had not negotiated supplemental agreements with countries in Europe where the United States based combat aircraft and purchased logistical support.

Supplemental agreements addressing basing and logistics details were not in effect with some host nations during Operation Allied Force. Such agreements between the United States and host countries often contain provisions stipulating that the United States will not be charged for airport landing, parking, or overflight. These agreements also often contain a provision stating that U.S. forces will be charged the same rates for logistics supplies and services as the foreign nations' own military forces are charged.

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While we did not attempt to independently determine whether or not any costs charged the United States during Operation Allied Force were excessive, a USAFE official cited one case in which U.S. aircraft were already enroute when an Air Force sergeant paid a NATO member's airport authority \$1.5 million for the use of the destination airport. If a supplemental agreement had been in place prior to Operation Allied Force allowing the United States the use of this airfield, the United States would not have had to pay this fee at all if the airfield was government owned, and any other fees for logistics supplies would have been the same as those charged the host nations' own military forces. The DOD official who is responsible for managing DOD's supplemental agreements worldwide told us that it is not unusual for countries with whom the United States does not have agreements to charge airfield landing and takeoff fees. He cited a case in which a U.S. airplane was not allowed to take off until the United States paid landing fees. This official said that supplemental agreements also typically cover such issues as exemptions from payment for goods and services at rates higher than those charged a country's own armed forces.

While generally the United States did not use Partnership for Peace countries for combat aircraft basing, some of these countries provided logistics services for allied forces and may be even more important in future conflicts. Most Partnership for Peace countries had only a very general Status of Forces Agreement with the United States.<sup>5</sup> According to an after-action report written by USAFE's Judge Advocate staff, the Partnership for Peace Status of Forces Agreement does not address the detailed matters required for sustained operations that can be provided in supplemental, country-specific agreements. The agreement provides adequate protections and privileges only for official visits, small unit activities, and most short-term military exercises and operations. The agreement does not include supplemental protections and privileges required for operations approaching the scale of Operation Allied Force, particularly as they relate to the following issues:

- the status of U.S. contractors and provisions for their logistical support;
- the use of U.S. contracting procedures for U.S.-funded procurements;
- exemption from value-added and similar taxes;

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<sup>5</sup>Partnership for Peace is a major initiative by NATO directed at increasing confidence and cooperative efforts to reinforce security. It offers participating states the possibility of strengthening their relations with NATO in accordance with their own individual interests and capabilities. At present, there are 27 Partnership for Peace countries.



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- the automatic waiver of host country criminal jurisdiction over U.S. personnel;
  - exemption from landing fees, navigation fees, and overflight charges;
  - expedited customs inspection procedures for U.S. forces' property;
  - the right to operate post exchanges; banks; post offices; commissaries; and morale, welfare, and recreation activities;
  - responsibility for the perimeter defense of installations and facilities used by U.S. personnel;
  - payment of residual value for improvements to facilities financed by the United States; and
  - privately owned vehicles' licensing and registration.

Because of the lack of supplemental agreements establishing arrangements for the purchase of goods and services, U.S. military components used the Acquisition and Cross Servicing Agreement Program during Operation Allied Force. This program allows military-to-military exchanges of logistics services and supplies for cash, equal value exchanges, or payment in kind. USAFE officials stressed the value of the program in that it allowed deployed commanders to obtain the necessary host nation support. The program was successfully used to provide parts and services to allies and to the United States.

While cross-servicing agreements were critical for U.S. forces to obtain needed host nation services, USAFE officials believe that the use of such agreements made hastily by many different individuals resulted in many inconsistencies in the agreements made. According to the USAFE Judge Advocate's report on Operation Allied Force, as a result of the absence of supplemental agreements with Partnership for Peace nations, some individual services' agreements with host nation individuals and companies were favorable to the United States, but some were not. Often, the terms and duration of these agreements differed from one country to another.

According to a DOD official, in 1995 the State Department granted DOD the authority to negotiate supplemental agreements with Partnership for Peace countries that would cover issues that are not included in their Status of Forces Agreements. At the time of Operation Allied Force, DOD had sent out model agreements to various Partnership for Peace countries as the beginnings of negotiations. According to one DOD official, negotiations have taken so long because of limited staff and other priorities. For USAFE officials, Operation Allied Force highlighted the dire need for in-place status and stationing arrangements for immediate use



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during future military operations in countries where the United States has no permanent presence.

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## Conclusions

Recent history demonstrates that air campaigns are likely to be significant portions of future conflicts the United States can anticipate. While we agree that the Commander of the U.S. European Command cannot prepare detailed plans that cover the specifics for every possible contingency, the kind of ad hoc basing of combat forces that occurred during Operation Allied Force demonstrates that the lack of at least some planning has the potential to result in costly and unnecessary problems and inefficiencies, as was the experience in this operation. Also, because the European Command did not coordinate the movement of all service and host nation participants, confusion arose over who was planning deployments, where airfields were available for basing in the region, and how arrangements should be made. Finally, without supplemental agreements with host nations from whom the United States is likely to request aircraft basing and logistics services during a future contingency, the United States will probably again be in the position of being vulnerable to paying excessive costs for these fees and services.

## Recommendations for Executive Action

We recommend that the Secretary of Defense direct the Commander of the European Command to develop the most detailed combat aircraft basing plans possible for future conflicts, like Operation Allied Force, that do not fit into the category of a major theater war or a peacekeeping operation. These plans should consider existing NATO plans and entail the appropriate coordination between DOD and the Department of State. They should also address the following issues, as discussed in our report:

- development of a strategy for basing aircraft that is tied to probable future threats,
- coordination of all service and host nation arrangements for basing their aircraft during contingencies, and
- maintaining a database of complete information on available airfields in EUCOM's area of responsibility and providing this information to all the services as needed.

To ensure that U.S. forces have access to airfields and bases from which they will need to conduct operations in likely future conflicts, we recommend that the Secretary of Defense direct EUCOM's Commander to work with the Department of State to finalize as many supplemental agreements with host nations as possible. These supplemental agreements should include provisions exempting the United States from being charged

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overflight, airfield access, and aircraft landing and parking fees. These supplemental agreements should also include a provision stating that U.S. troops should be charged rates for logistics supplies that are comparable to the rates charged the host nation's own armed forces.

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## Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

In written comments on a draft of this report, DOD agreed with the contents of the report and concurred with the recommendations. DOD stated that future aircraft basing plans need to consider operational and political issues that must be overcome with each host nation. Also, host nation agreements should consider existing NATO basing plans. Technical changes were made as appropriate throughout the report. The comments are presented and evaluated in appendix I.

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## Scope and Methodology

To determine what plans were in place to determine where and how to deploy combat aircraft for Operation Allied Force and how combat aircraft basing decisions were coordinated among the services and allied nations, we visited the U.S. European Command in Stuttgart, Germany, and interviewed officials who had participated in the operation. We also visited the U.S. Air Forces, Europe, at Ramstein Air Base, Germany, and interviewed officials in the Offices of Strategy and Deliberate Plans/Engagements, Plans and Doctrine, Logistics, Civil Engineering, Financial Management, and the Air Operations Squadron Plans Division. In addition, we reviewed documentation on Operation Allied Force planning and coordination efforts at these locations.

To determine whether the United States had the necessary international agreements in force to enable it to quickly execute plans for Operation Allied Force, we interviewed officials in the Operations Law Division of the Judge Advocate General's Office at the U.S. Air Forces, Europe. We also interviewed officials in the Office of Foreign Military Affairs, Assistant Secretary of Defense (International Security Affairs). To discuss issues involving who may be granted the authority to negotiate supplemental international agreements, we interviewed officials in the Office of Treaty Affairs in the U.S. Department of State. We also reviewed documentation on supplemental international agreements.

We conducted our review between September 2000 and June 2001 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

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We are sending copies of this report to the Honorable Donald H. Rumsfeld, Secretary of Defense; the Honorable Joseph W. Westphal, Acting Secretary of the Army; the Honorable Robert B. Pirie, Jr., Acting Secretary of the Navy; the Honorable Lawrence J. Delaney, Acting Secretary of the Air Force; General James L. Jones, Commandant of the Marine Corps; the Honorable Colin L. Powell, Secretary of State; and the Honorable Mitchell E. Daniels, Jr., Director of the Office of Management and Budget. We will also make copies available to others upon request.

Please contact me at (757) 552-8111 if you or your staff have any questions concerning this report. Key staff who contributed to this report were William Cawood, Donna Rogers, Beverly Schladt, and Nancy Ragsdale.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Neal P. Curtin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "N" and "C".

Neal P. Curtin  
Director  
Defense Capabilities and Management

# Appendix I: Comments From the Department of Defense

Note: GAO comments supplementing those in the report text appear at the end of this appendix.



**THE JOINT STAFF**  
WASHINGTON, DC

Reply ZIP Code:  
20318-0300

10 May 2001

Mr. Neal P. Curtin  
Director  
Defense Capabilities and  
Management  
US General Accounting Office  
Washington, D.C. 20584

Dear Mr. Curtin,

This is the Department of Defense response to the GAO draft report, "Kosovo Air Operations: Combat Aircraft Basing Plans are Needed in Advance of Future Conflicts" dated March 19, 2001. Thank you for the opportunity to review subject draft report. We concur in the document subject to inclusion of the enclosed comments.

The Joint Staff point of contact is Lieutenant Commander E. J. Cowan, USN, J-7, (703) 695-3026.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Garry R. Trexler".

GARRY R. TREXLER  
Major General, USAF  
Vice Director, Joint Staff

ENCLOSURE

JOINT STAFF COMMENTS  
ON

REVIEW OF GAO DRAFT REPORT, "KOSOVO AIR OPERATIONS:  
COMBAT AIRCRAFT BASING PLANS ARE NEEDED IN ADVANCE OF  
FUTURE CONFLICTS," MARCH 19, 2001 (GAO CODE 702079)

**RECOMMENDATION 1:** The GAO recommended that the Secretary of Defense direct the Commander of the European Command to develop the most detailed combat aircraft basing plans possible for future conflicts, like Operation Allied Force, that do not fit into the category of a major theater war or a peacekeeping operation. These plans should address the following issues, as discussed in this draft report:

- the development of a strategy for basing aircraft that is tied to probable future threats,
- coordination of all Service and host nation arrangements for basing their aircraft during contingencies, and
- maintaining a database of complete information on available airfields in the European Command's area of responsibility and providing this formation to all the services as needed.

**DOD RESPONSE:**

General Comments

a. There are 26 Acquisition and Cross Serving Agreements (ACSA) that have already been negotiated with nations in the USEUCOM area of responsibility. There is also an ACSA with the NATO Maintenance and Supply Agency (NAMSA). Finally there are 6 additional agreements currently being negotiated with nations under USEUCOM's area of responsibility, including Italy. These agreements provide a mechanism that assures access for the United States military to supplies and services at rates comparable to the host nation's own armed forces. The Joint Staff, OSD, DOS, and USEUCOM regularly collaborate on development and maintenance of such agreements as part of the deliberate planning process.

b. Concur in GAO's report and recommendation on the need for detailed combat aircraft basing plans for future conflicts in Europe.

See comment 1.

See comment 2.

Operation Allied Force was successful in the end, but it did uncover a large number of gaps in US plans in air operations of this magnitude. However, while the report rightfully focused primarily on the need for future plans based almost solely on the premise of limiting US vulnerabilities to paying excessive costs for fees and services related to basing rights, there are tremendous operational and political issues that must be overcome with each host nation. In Europe (and particularly in the Balkans), to consider future basing plans with a purely "cost savings" objective, is to plan in a vacuum.

**RECOMMENDATION 2:** The GAO recommended that the Secretary of Defense direct the European Command's Commander to work with the Department of State to finalize as many supplemental agreements with host nations as possible. These supplemental agreements should include provisions exempting the United States from being charged overflight, airfield access, and aircraft landing and parking fees; and, a provision stating that U.S. troops should be charged rates for logistics supplies that are comparable to the rates charged the host nation's own armed forces.

**DOD RESPONSE:**

See comment 3.

1. The report recommends that USEUCOM develop "detailed combat aircraft basing plans" with potential host nations from whom the United States is likely to request aircraft basing and logistical services during future contingency operations. It further recommends that USEUCOM coordinate closely with DOS to finalize as many "supplemental agreements with host nations as possible." While the recommendation is certainly valid, it is also purely bilateral in nature. Based on past major operations in this theater, it is highly unlikely that the United States will operate unilaterally in a future crisis in Europe. With this in mind, the report may want to include a comment that USEUCOM basing plans should, as a minimum, consider existing (or working) NATO basing plans. NATO agreements may in the long run prove less expensive than US-only basing agreements.

See comment 4.

2. An additional comment is worth offering on site surveys (page 14). Site surveys are absolutely vital, if and when a host nation airport and its relative facilities are needed to support US air operations. However, the nations that own these facilities are often very sensitive about foreigners conducting any type of "collection" on their facilities. In the conclusion, a comment may be worth making that addresses the host nation sensitivity of such collection and the absolute requirement to properly coordinate with the respective Defense Attaché Office or US Embassy of the targeted host nation before doing any site survey. In

many cases, US intelligence agencies may already have the required information.

See comment 5.

3. GAO limited its investigation to the US portion of what was a NATO operation and evaluated its findings without fully considering the limitations inherent with coalition operations. The United States contributed the bulk of combat forces, but did so in a NATO structure, operation within NATO's guidelines as part of a coalition.

See comment 6.

4 GAO did not evaluate aircraft re-basing during Operation ALLIED FORCE in the context of evolving tactical and political environments.

See comment 7.

5. GAO recommendation for USEUCOM to maintain "a database of complete information on available airfields" in USEUCOM's AOR (~90 countries) entails tremendous expense and may be duplicative of existing resources (e.g., Automated Air Facility Information File).

See comment 8.

6. GAO recommendation for SecDef to direct USEUCOM to finalize as many supplemental host-nation agreements as possible runs counter to DOS role as lead agency for negotiating such agreements. The host country generally sets the pace of negotiations and the scope of possible agreements should be weighed against their expected cost and any operational security implications.

7. Add the following

See comment 9.

a. Page 3, paragraph 2, line 4. "...their own deployments. Aircraft land basing issues for Naval forces were minimal, as the majority of Naval forces supporting OAF were pre-planned, rotationally deployed using normal deployment/detachment facilities. The Air Force..."

Reason: Navy land based aircraft consisted of Ea6Bs in Aviano, P3s at NAS Sigonella, and EP-3s at Souda Bay.

See comment 10.

b. Page 5, Figure 1. Add a block depicting Souda Bay, Crete as one of the land bases being used at the beginning of OAF.

Reason: Air Force was not using Souda Bay at the beginning of OAF. However, the figure is titled "European Land Bases Being Used by US Aircraft at the Beginning of Operation Allied Force." Navy EP-3s were operating out of Souda Bay at the beginning of OAF.

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The following are GAO's comments on the Department of Defense's (DOD) letter dated May 10, 2001.

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## GAO Comments

1. We were aware that the military services used Acquisition and Cross Servicing Agreements during Operation Allied Force to purchase host nation goods and services, and we discuss this usage in the body of our report (see p. 14). However, as we state there, U.S. Air Forces in Europe officials told us that the use of such agreements made hastily during Operation Allied Force resulted in inconsistencies in agreements with different countries, some of which were favorable to the United States and some of which were not. We continue to believe that more uniformity and advanced planning for purchasing such items and services could result in lower costs to the United States in future conflicts.
2. We agree that arranging issues of combat basing rights are politically sensitive. We also agree that such arrangements cannot be made on a purely cost savings basis. We did not state in our draft report that cost should be the only consideration, nor do we here.
3. We agree that U.S. European Command's (EUCOM) combat basing plans should consider existing North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) basing plans and have included this wording in our recommendation (see p. 15).
4. We have added language to our recommendation stating that, when making combat aircraft basing plans, including conducting site surveys, DOD should appropriately coordinate with the Department of State (see p. 15).
5. As noted in our draft report, because Operation Allied Force did not fit into the definition of conflicts for which NATO had prepared combat plans, NATO's structure did not apply to Operation Allied Force, and the United States prepared plans for its own participation in the operation after the conflict arose.
6. While we did not evaluate aircraft rebasing in this report, we recognize that a certain amount of rebasing will occur during any conflict. We continue to believe, however, that more advanced planning could have minimized such rebasing during Operation Allied Force.



7. We expect that, as part of its effort to create a database of available airfields, EUCOM will make use of already available resources to minimize or eliminate any duplication of effort.
8. Our recommendation states that the Secretary of Defense should direct EUCOM's Commander to work with the Department of State to finalize as many supplemental agreements as possible. With the Department of State's oversight, DOD can ensure that the scope of possible agreements is weighed against their expected cost and any operational security implications.
9. This statement is added in a footnote on p. 5.
10. This statement is added in a footnote on p. 3.

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